

1. *Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. (50)*

The practice proposed for recognition is the *Mandarin and Me* World Language program for all elementary students. Specifically, all students in grades 1-3 receive twice weekly instruction in Mandarin Language and Chinese culture. Beyond this formal program these skills are integrated across the curriculum throughout the day. Students use Mandarin to conduct morning calendar activities, complete mathematics assignments in characters, create arts/crafts projects that reflect the culture, and study the geography and peoples of China. Begun in 1996-1997 as a short, grade specific experience, the program became formal in 1997-1998 with a foundation grant. One grade level at a time has been added and by January 1999, all students K-4 will participate in the formal language component of the program. The program is taught by a native speaking "lausha," assisted by the regular classroom teachers. This cooperative teaching model allows the classroom teacher to also learn the language and to develop extension activities to be taught outside this instructional period. Formal instruction periods are thirty minutes per session. In 1998, we engaged the entire student body in "A Visit to China" experience. For six weeks, we spent Friday afternoons participating in multi-aged interest groups to learn about China, her history, games and arts. We culminated this club experience with group presentations during Sharing Assembly. Students had an opportunity to walk within a miniature Forbidden City, fly dragon kites and sample Chinese cuisine; to name a few.

The objectives for this World Language program include:

- To teach all students to **communicate** in a spoken language other than English. To engage in basic conversation, communicate opinions, articulate common themes (body parts, colors, foods, etc.) and perform numeric operations (calendar, grade appropriate mathematics).
- To gain knowledge and understanding of another **culture**. To have positive experiences in another culture, to learn tolerance, acceptance, and appreciation for the differences we share.
- To make **connections** to other disciplines. To acquire distinctive viewpoints and relate the teachings to study across the curriculum.
- To demonstrate an **understanding** of the interrelationship between a language and culture.
- To participate in multi-lingual **communities** at school and around the world.

In May 1996, the State Board of Education issued the first ever Core Curriculum Content Standards. We were already exploring ways to add foreign language instruction to our program. Our knowledge of current brain research had revealed what good elementary teachers intuitively knew – children's brains are rich with synapses waiting to be connected. The elementary years are the best time to expose students to music, arts, and language. The State Standards confirmed these findings. Additionally, we had read: Foreign language learning enhances cognitive development and basic skills performance in elementary school (Fuchsen, 1989); Children for whom foreign language and cultures have greater potential in international and intercultural communications (Weatherford, 1986); and, Children who study a foreign language have an improved self-concept and sense of achievement in school (Lipton, 1995). Therefore, we knew that a program that addressed each of these characteristics would result in higher academic achievement, increased tolerance/understanding, and perhaps, prepare students for adult career choices.

This program is easily replicated with minimal funding. The classroom teacher is the certificated person in the room. A native speaker with an understanding and rapport with elementary students provides the language experience. Our instructor is paid hourly and we share her with another district. Instruction originally centered on a language curriculum guide developed specifically for this program. With the recently published World Language Framework, we are beginning to develop a district specific curriculum guide that documents integration. The regular classroom teachers work cooperatively with the language instructor to provide the pedagogical expertise and connections to the curriculum. This partnership is essential to the success of the integrated model.

2. *Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they are identified. List the Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). (50)*

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century dawns the world is becoming a global village. Countries are becoming increasingly dependent upon one another for goods and services. Students need to be able to communicate with people of other cultures to participate in global partnerships. Partnerships require understanding and practice in problem-solving and interpersonal skills. More than five years ago parents and staff identified the need to create a learning community. Cross-grade and school-wide activities helped to develop focus and learning. Students organize and facilitate bi-monthly Sharing Assemblies that celebrate class and individual accomplishments. Several community outreach programs strengthen student civic responsibility by developing a sense of obligation to a larger community. In 1996, several staff members explored the potential held by the Pacific Rim nations in influencing the 21<sup>st</sup> century. With more than one-quarter of the world's population currently living in China, with Mandarin the most spoken language on the planet, and with the doors to China opening to the world in 1997, we believe that it is important for our students to gain knowledge and understanding of China. We initiated a pilot project with first graders in 1996 to introduce them to the language, geography and culture of China. By focusing on this "opposite side of the world," we are also able to model a global village. Parent support was quick to follow. Our program was addressing the newly adopted State Core Curriculum Standards. The School Goal Committee selected the ability to communicate, orally, in Mandarin as a goal for all first and second graders. Because the language and culture component of the program is team-taught by a native speaker and the classroom teacher, connections across the curriculum are possible and frequent.

The Core Curriculum Content and Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by this practice and how that is accomplished include:

- World Language Standards 7.1 and 7.2  
Students in grades one, two and three receive direct language instruction twice weekly for thirty minutes per session. The format and content of instruction stresses basic communication.
- Social Studies Standards 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9.  
The classroom teachers provide opportunities for first grade students to use maps and globes to determine where China is and what physical features it has in common with the US. As language instruction progresses through the grades, there are frequent opportunities to interact with Chinese-Americans and it discusses the contributions of the Chinese people to the world, the US, NJ and our local community. Second graders have an opportunity for developing their understanding of the human systems, economics and historical perspectives of China through an in-depth study of the country.
- Science Standards 5.3 and 5.12  
Students learn to use the first calculator, the Chinese abacus. They also learn that the Chinese invented paper and fireworks. They may learn how kites were the first weapons of war and an ancient fishing pole. They explore written characters as a formal communication of complete thoughts. Students explore the various manufactured products for which the US is dependent on China. Finally, students in all grades are exposed to environmental considerations and concerns in China and the US.
- Mathematics Standard 4.3  
Students integrate their knowledge of oral numbers and characters when performing mathematical equations and doing daily calendar activities.
- Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Standard 2.5  
As a part of physical and dance education, students are introduced to traditional dance (Lion, Dragon, Ribbon), TiKwanDo, and T'aiChi.
- Visual and Performing Arts Standard 1.5  
All students explore the historical, social, and culture influence and traditions of the Chinese. These include, but are not limited to instruction in calligraphy, brush painting, origami, martial arts, and the Peking Opera.

3. *Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. (60)*

The Mandarin program is in its third year. Our “Community of Learners” philosophy and activities have been in place for five years. Though standardized tests do not specifically measure the objectives for this program, students have shown substantial academic growth over the last several years. In 1996, students scored at or above the 70<sup>th</sup> percentile nationally on the total battery of tests. In 1997, that score increased to the 79<sup>th</sup> percentile. Our most recent standardized testing, spring 1998, noted class average scores at or above the 88<sup>th</sup> percentile on the total battery of tests. We point to this increase in academic achievement as a result of our emphasis on community learning, attention to a foreign language, and the influence of our extensive arts education program. Non-standardized and informal assessment by the staff concludes:

- During school year 1997-1998, our goal for first and second graders was that **all** students would demonstrate mastery of a list of basic literary topics on an oral examination in Mandarin Chinese. We met and exceeded this goal. All students can **communicate** basic information in a second language. Teachers report that morning calendar activities are frequently completed orally in Mandarin. Lunch aides report that Red Light/Green Light, Red Rover-Red Rover and Simon Says are often played at recess with Mandarin commands. Parents report that students often demonstrate this knowledge when they dine in Chinese restaurants or order take-out. Mandarin instruction is expanding students’ intrinsic motivation as they develop their speaking skills in this private, special language. Our winter club program in 1998 exposed all students to some aspect of Chinese culture. Parents and staff served as instructors. During our culminating Chinese New Year celebration all students participated in modeling greetings, doing mathematical computations, and singing festive songs. For the 1998-1999 school year we have increased our expectations and continued a building objective related to student use of Mandarin.
- During the December holidays, students enthusiastically share those traditions that represent their individual **cultures**. Adults in the community often note acceptance, tolerance and appreciation of difference. Our Mandarin students delight in learning to use chop sticks, understand why the Chinese calendar is different than ours, and enjoy learning about and celebrating Chinese holidays.
- After learning to write Chinese characters for the numbers, first grade students decided to complete their mathematics homework in Mandarin! The level of excitement reached fever pitch as students learned to count by fives and play several addition games in their new language. By using classroom teachers as partners in the Mandarin language instruction, the program is easily integrated across the curriculum, thereby **connecting** it to other disciplines.
- Throughout the year, and often as a new topic is introduced, students have opportunities to make **comparisons** between traditions and requirement of the English language and those of Mandarin. Such comparisons are in the structure of language and its relationship to tradition (i.e. the respect for educators). As comparisons are made, students also learn critical thinking and problem solving.
- The school is a world **community**. Bi-monthly Sharing Assemblies allow us to celebrate our differences and our accomplishments. This activity is also responsible for developing student skills in public speaking and presentation, as well as, appreciation of the efforts/accomplishments of peers. A second building goal in 1997-1998 challenged **all** students to achieve a minimum score of 3 on the State Public Speaking Rubric in a class specific assignment. The Sharing Assembly experience helped all students achieve this goal.

A visit to this school will demonstrate the value of the World Language focus in helping develop citizens for the global village.